ST. MICHAEL THE ARCHANGEL RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH
(Salem German Reformed Church)
Fourth Street & Fairmount Avenue
Philadelphia
Philadelphia County
Pennsylvania

HABS PA-6722
PA-6722

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240-0001

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

ST. MICHAEL THE ARCHANGEL RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH
(Salem German Reformed Church)

HABS No. PA-6722

Location: Fourth Street and Fairmount Avenue, Philadelphia, Philadelphia County, Pennsylvania

Present Owner/ Occupant: St. Michael the Archangel Russian Orthodox Church

Present Use: Russian Orthodox church

Significance: Although principally constructed sometime between 1869 and 1874, the Romanesque Revival St. Michael the Archangel Russian Orthodox Church, located in Philadelphia's Northern Liberties neighborhood, was impacted by the building efforts and transformations of congregations occupying the site from 1835 through the present. In 1835, the Central Presbyterian Church of the Northern Liberties constructed a church on the site. It was subsequently sold to the Salem German Reformed congregation who razed much of the building. The similarity in footprint between the new church, dedicated in 1874, and its predecessor suggests the probable use of some or all of the earlier foundations. The German Reformed congregation was well-served by the new building for nearly fifty-years before it was sold, because of declining membership, to the Russian Orthodox church of St. Michael the Archangel, which remains there to this day. During their tenure, the congregation has made significant, mostly interior changes to suit the liturgical and symbolic needs of the Orthodox congregation, including the construction of a traditional iconostasis across the front of the church and the painting of large figural murals. The principal significance of the church of St. Michael the Archangel rests on its links to the three congregations with which it was indirectly or directly associated. Each of these congregations came to the corner of Fourth and Fairmount seeking the opportunity to worship in the manner they desired and created centers of spiritual and cultural life that have historically and presently served many of the residents of the Northern Liberties neighborhood.

Historian: David Amott, Summer 2006

PART I: HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History

1. Date of erection: The Salem German Reformed Congregation constructed St. Michael

the Archangel Russian Orthodox Church sometime between the property's purchase in 1869 and the church building's dedication in 1874.[1]

2. **Architect:** A surviving program from the church's October 1874 dedication lists the congregation's sixteen building-committee members, but names no architect.[2] While it is likely an architect, or at the very least a highly skilled builder, was involved, no documents confirming this likelihood are presently known .

3. **Original and Subsequent Owners and Occupants:**

1835–1869:	Central Presbyterian Church (property)
1869 –1923:	Salem German Reformed Church
1923–Present:	St. Michael the Archangel Russian Orthodox Church

4. **Original Plans and Construction:**

Landscape

Ernest Hexamer and William Locher's *Maps of the City of Philadelphia* (1859) shows the Central Presbyterian Church, built in 1835, surrounded on all sides except its façade (south elevation) by wood "trinity" houses and a brewery complex.[3] The church's façade looked onto a narrow courtyard, which acted as an access-way between Coates (later Fairmount) Avenue and the church's front door.[4] A *Baist Insurance Map of Philadelphia* from 1895 shows that the Salem German Reformed church occupied a

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[1] Salem German Reformed Church dedicatory program, 11 Oct. 1874, Salem German Reform Congregation Archives (hereafter **SGRCA**), Special Collections Department, Philip Schaff Library, Lancaster Theological Seminary, Lancaster, Pennsylvania.

[2] Ibid. The sixteen members of the Salem German Reformed Congregation's building committee included Conrad Breidenbach, Jafob Schmidt, Jacob Reich, Nuguft Reins, Herman Bifchman, Phillipp Doerr, Jafob Pfingstag, Theodor Leupold, Karl Rofch, Jafob Heidrich, Johannes Loher, Jafob Braun, Georg M. Ghrlen, Benjamin Hendrichts, Henrich Kunzig, Phillipp Schmidt.

[3] Many of the houses that surrounded the original Central Presbyterian Church were small urban houses and tenements commonly referred to as "Father, Son, and Holy Ghost" or "trinity" houses. The term referred to a popular Philadelphia domestic plan placing a single room on each of a dwelling's three floors. The historian John F. Sutherland wrote: "[trinity houses] rarely fronted the streets, but instead were built in back yards and formed little courts, which were often invisible from the street...[such houses] contained only one room per floor, with an unenclosed stairway leading from one floor to another. They could be suitable for one small family, but they were unfit for the poor who often crowded into them. These rear courts multiplied as the city's original large lots were subdivided. They were probably built both for speculation and for servants' quarters. Of great significance is the fact that they were rear dwellings, often obscured from the view of passers-by." See John F. Sutherland, "Housing for the Poor," in *The Peoples of Philadelphia: A History of Ethnic Groups and Lower-Class Life, 1790-1940*, ed. Allen F. Davis and Mark H. Haller (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1973), 176.

[4] Ernest Hexamer and William Locher, *Maps of the City of Philadelphia* (Philadelphia, 1859). The website www.philageohistory.org offers an extensive online collection of historic Philadelphia fire insurance maps and atlases spanning the mid-nineteenth to the early-twentieth century.

position on the lot similar to that of the earlier Central Presbyterian Church, but with an increase in the surrounding open space with the removal of adjacent buildings.[5]

Beyond recording the construction of this new church and the modification of its immediate surroundings, these two insurance maps illustrate the dramatic change the Northern Liberties district underwent during the latter half of the nineteenth century. The 1859 map shows the neighborhood filled with small wood houses and low-lying workshops, while the one from 1895 depicts a neighborhood filled with brick row houses, schools, police stations, and social halls. As such, these maps document a transitional era in the history of Northern Liberties when much of its original frame fabric was replaced with the brick and stone buildings still scattered throughout the area.

Building History

The location and perimeter dimensions of the current St. Michael the Archangel Russian Orthodox Church were essentially established with the 1835 Central Presbyterian Church that previously occupied the site in the block at the northeast corner of Fourth and Fairmount. On December 31, 1834, the Northern Liberties Central Presbyterian Church's building committee gathered to discuss "purchasing a lot of ground and the erection thereon of a building…to accommodate a congregation…Sunday and infant schools, and any other object by which the morals and minds of youth in this neighborhood may be improved."[6] Eventually this congregation bought two adjoining lots on the north side of "Coates Street below Fourth," paying for these lots with church "stock" held at $200 per share.[7] These two properties were subsequently joined and cleared of all but the two houses that stood at the front of the first lot oriented to Coates Street.[8] Construction proceeded rapidly on the church and it was largely complete by the end of 1835.[9]

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[5] G. W. Baist, *Baist's Property Atlas of the City and County of Philadelphia* (Philadelphia, 1895).

[6] James Y. Mitchell, *History and Directory of Temple Presbyterian Church* (Philadelphia: J.W. Daughaday and Co., 1878), 14.

[7] Ibid.

[8] An indenture dated November 13, 1833 between "The First Presbyterian Church of Penn Township, Philadelphia and Charles Elliot of Northern Liberties" documents this transaction. The indenture records the lots' prices at three thousand dollars and indicates that the property encompassed "certain tenement stables and a lot or piece of ground composed of two contiguous lots situate on the North side of Coats Street…containing in breadth East and West forty feet and in length or depth one hundred sixty six feet." The indenture also reveals that at least a portion of the lot was to be rented yearly for "twenty six Spanish Milled Silver Dollars and two thirds of a dollar payable unto Conrad Gerhard and his Heirs and Assigns on the first day of March in each and every year forever without any deduction for taxes." See: Vincent Saverino, *The Church at Fourth and Fairmount* (Philadelphia: St. Michael the Archangel Russian Orthodox Church, 1998), 10, 13.

[9] Mitchell, 15-16. Unless otherwise noted, all information about the church's appearance is drawn from these pages in this source.

According to an 1878 description of the Central Presbyterian Church written by the church's pastor a decade after the congregation's departure from Northern Liberties, the church stood 61'-0" wide by 66'-0" deep, was constructed of "roughly hewn stone," and deemed as "plain, but attractive… [featuring a design that stayed] in rigid conformity to the style of church architecture common at that day." The interior of the church included "an audience room [filled with] one hundred and seventeen pews and in the gallery thirty pews… [which could accommodate] seven hundred people," while the lower floor was "…in the true sense of that word, a *basement,*" consisting of a "lecture room, which was used also as the main Sunday School room, the session and trustees' room, and the Infant Sunday School room."[10] The narrow yard surrounding the church were filled with burial vaults, "some of which were designed for the poor of the church, some for rent to outside parties, and some for sale to any desiring to purchase."

While confirming that the Central Presbyterian Church was built to be "complete, as completeness was reckoned in those days," Mitchell's recollections of his congregation's former building nonetheless emphasized many of its flaws rather than its attributes. This focus on the building's limitations may help to explain why the Central Presbyterian congregation sold their church with all its furnishings to the German Reformed congregation for the reasonable price of $17,750, and point to why the German Reformed congregation subsequently had the building demolished.[11] According to Central Presbyterian Church histories, the transaction between the two congregations was settled on April 27, 1869, although the deed was not recorded until August 20.[12]

Early in the 1870s, after tearing down a church building that had evident problems and also likely appeared rather antiquated, the Salem German Reformed congregation began construction of a thoroughly up-to-date sanctuary featuring an eclectic mix of Romanesque and Gothic architectural details common to many Philadelphia churches

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[10] With further comment about the basement, Mitchell wrote "its floor was several feet below the line of pavement, and we wonder not, that in our day, many complaints were made of its darkness and dampness" (16).

[11] The congregation of the Central Presbyterian Church first attempted to sell their church on November 24, 1868 at an auction for no less than $15,000; however, it did not receive a single bid and remained on the market until April 27, 1869 when the German Reformed church purchased the property. Many members of the Central Presbyterian Church considered this turnabout a miracle, and many who had resisted selling the old church to fund a new one considerably increased their donations to the congregation's building fund in the wake of the transaction. On February 4, 1872, this congregation dedicated their new "Temple Protestant Church," which stood on the corner of Franklin and Thompson Streets above Girard Avenue. See: Mitchell, 79-81, and Kenneth A. Hammonds, *Historical Directory of Presbyterian Churches and Presbyteries of Greater Philadelphia: Related to the Presbyterian Church and its Antecedents 1690-1990* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Historical Society, 1993), 75, and the 1872 Philadelphia timeline found in Rudolph J. Walther, *Happenings in ye Olde Philadelphia 1680-1900* (Philadelphia: Walther Printing House, 1925), 46.

[12] Mitchell, 79, and Deed, 20 Aug. 1869, SGRCA. Because the Salem German Reformed congregation's charter did not authorize relocating the church from its original site at the corner of St. John and Green streets, it had to petition the Pennsylvania legislature for permission to move. This was granted on March 2, 1871. See: "An act to enable the German Reformed Congregation of Philadelphia to sell, lease, purchase, and hold real estate," 2 Mar. 1871, SGRCA.

built in the same era.[13] The new church boasted solid brick walls; tall, arched windows; a patterned shingled roof; stone window caps and sills; and elaborate masonry molding and cornices. Its most prominent and distinguishing characteristic was a spire featuring four gables and four clocks that faced each of the cardinal directions. This lofty spire provided the church with added visibility, as did its overall massing, which, unlike the earlier Presbyterian church, placed a fully-raised, ground-level social hall under the upper-level sanctuary. Undoubtedly a costly church to build, the Salem German Reformed congregation was nonetheless aided by several bequests which included donations made by parishioners on the condition that the church provide for and maintain their burial plots.[14] While the exact start-date for construction remains unknown, a notice in the October 10, 1874 *Philadelphia Public Ledger* recorded that the church was to be dedicated on the next morning "with appropriate ceremony."[15]

Surviving records and evidence indicate that the Salem German Reformed Church remained largely unaltered after its 1874 dedication and retained many of its original elements when it was sold to the congregation of St. Michael the Archangel. From 1913 until 1923, the congregants of St. Michael's held services in their own church building located near the German Reformed church at the corner of Spring Garden and Sixth Street.[16] Unfortunately, in 1922 the City of Philadelphia approved plans to construct a bridge at the end of Spring Garden Street, which required its widening and, as a result, the demolition of the first church for the St. Michael the Archangel congregation; only after Spring Garden Street had been widened were the plans for using the street as the bridge's Philadelphia terminus abandoned.[17] Wishing to remain in the Northern Liberties

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[13] Examples of similarly-styled Philadelphia-area churches include the ca. 1870 Catholic Church of the Immaculate Conception at Allen and Hope streets in Northern Liberties, and the ca. 1870 Second Moravian Church located at Franklin and Thompson Streets in North Philadelphia. Period images of both churches are found in the Robert Newell Collection housed at Bryn Mawr College and may be viewed on-line at http://www.brynmawr.edu/iconog/nwl/Newell.html.

[14] See the wills for Clara Hoffman (d. 1870) and Elizabeth Ditsche (d. 1876) maintained in SGRCA.

[15] According to the newspaper report, the German Reformed congregation began the dedication services with a parade that commenced at the site of their old church at "St. Johns Street below Green" and terminated at the new church "at Fairmount Avenue below Fourth." The rest of the day was filled with sermons and speeches given by important members of the congregation and the larger Presbyterian community. "Church Notices," *Philadelphia Public Ledger*, 10 Oct. 1874.

[16] The firm of Anderson and Haupt provided the design for the original St. Michael the Archangel church building. It was described in 1913 s a "stone, one story [building], 55x100 feet." See: "Contracts Awarded," *Philadelphia Real Estate and Builder's Guide* 28 (4 Jun. 1913). The same architectural firm had earlier designed nearby St. Andrew's Russian Orthodox Cathedral, the city's first Russian Orthodox church (HABS No. PA-6721).

[17] For more information regarding this project, see: "Spring Garden Urged as Bridge Terminus," *Philadelphia Bulletin* 28 Nov. 1919, and "Open Spring Garden Street: Mayor Signs Ordinance Extending it to River," *Philadelphia Bulletin* 27 Nov. 1922, both clippings in "St. Michael's Church" folder, Urban Archives, Paley Library, Temple University, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

area, St. Michael the Archangel's congregants decided to move to the nearby Salem German Reformed Church, which was then for sale. The two congregations apparently shared the church for a brief time during the summer of 1923 before St. Michael's congregants purchased the building for a reported $77,500.[18] Over the course of the next several decades, the Russian Orthodox church gradually altered the exterior and interior of the building for ease of maintenance and support of their own Orthodox religious traditions.

5. Alterations and Additions:

Exterior

Except for a few notable changes, the exterior of St. Michael the Archangel Church retains many of its original 1874 details. Exterior alterations have included the removal of four clocks and much of the decorative molding on the church's steeple. Most of the church's original stained glass windows and ornamental window casings have been replaced by new, stained-glass windows without casings. Additionally, at some point in the twentieth century, a brick entryway leading into the first floor social hall was added onto the church's western wall.

Interior

Most of the significant alterations made to St. Michael the Archangel Church have occurred on the building's interior. Almost all of the sanctuary's original, leaded-glass windows have been switched out for new ones depicting Orthodox saints. In addition to these windows, the congregation has also constructed a traditional Orthodox iconostasis stretching across the front of the sanctuary. Featuring only a single tier of icons, as opposed to the customary multi-tiered iconostases common to most Orthodox churches, St. Michael's iconostasis still visually separates the church's central alter area from the rest of the sanctuary, symbolizing the division between heaven and earth.

In the late 1940s, the congregation hired the artist George Novikov (sometimes spelled Novikoff), an itinerant icon painter who also worked in nearby St. Andrew's Russian Orthodox Cathedral and St. Nicholas Russian Orthodox Church, to create a large mural filling the arched recess in the wall behind the church's main altar. Portraying Christ's crucifixion, lamentation, deposition, and resurrection, Novikov's mural more closely followed popular Catholic, rather than traditional Russian Orthodox, imagery. Likely aware of the congregation's blended "Uniate" (a mixture of Eastern Orthodox and Roman Catholic beliefs) background, perhaps Novikov chose these "Catholic" images in hope

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[18] A 1998 St. Michael the Archangel parish history suggests the sale of the church occurred at some point in April 1923. While the original deed documenting this transaction is presently lost, the *Salem German Reform Congregation Treasurer's Book* indicates that the St. Michael congregation was "renting" the building during much of the summer of 1923, splitting janitorial and electric fees with the German Reformed congregation. In his history of St. Michael the Archangel, Father Vincent Saverino (the present pastor) notes that there was some discrepancy regarding the amount the church paid for the building. While St. Michael the Archangel's records state a cost of $77,500, the German Reformed Church's records show a cost of $84,500. *Salem German Reform Congregation Treasurer's Book*, 1895-9 Oct. 1923, SGRCA; Saverino, 10.

that they would resonate with the parishioners.[19] These new altar murals replaced the church's original German Reformed murals depicting "Christ Knocking at the Door," with additional images of "God the Father" and two saints (likely Peter and Paul) on either side of the central image of Christ.[20] In addition to Novikov's altar murals, the congregation hired other artists to create murals in the upper corners of the sanctuary's north wall depicting Christ's transfiguration and ascension. The congregation also had artists paint the sanctuary's ceiling sky blue and line its edges with clouds.

One significant change was made to the room's spatial arrangement. At an unknown date, the congregation created additional space in the horseshoe-shaped balcony for its choir by removing the nineteenth-century organ. Because Orthodox liturgical music is sung *a capella*, the organ was not needed and the additional space could be used for the large choir that accompanies the priest during services.

The congregation also significantly altered the ground-floor social hall during the twentieth century. The original dividing walls were removed late in the 1940s to create an open hall that easily accommodated large groups of people. About the same time, a large stage stretching across the north wall was replaced by an oversized kitchen used to prepare the large community and congregational dinners that the church has sponsored for decades.

B. Historical Context:

Philadelphia's Northern Liberties

Located outside William Penn's orthogonal grid for Philadelphia, as published in 1683, the Northern Liberties purportedly acquired its name from its "liberty lands" granted free of charge to those who purchased plots of land within the boundaries of the colonial city.[21] The 1854 Act of Consolidation had allowed the City of Philadelphia to annex the Northern Liberties District and twenty-nine nearby, previously independent townships,

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[19] According to the Orthodox Church of America, the term "Uniate" or "Uniat" "commonly refers to Orthodox Christians who left Orthodoxy and acknowledged the jurisdiction of the Pope of Rome while retaining the rites and practices observed by Orthodoxy. There have been several movements of this type throughout Church history. The term 'Uniate' is seen as negative by such individuals, who are more commonly referred to as Catholics of the Byzantine Rite, Greek Catholics, Eastern Rite Catholics, Melkite Catholics, or any number of other titles." See: Fr. John Matusiak, *Orthodox Church of America*, "The Word Uniate," accessed online, 18 Dec. 2006, http://www.oca.org/QA.asp?ID=199&SID=3.

[20] Regrettably, little is known about George Novikov. Reportedly, the artist traveled extensively and painted the interiors of many Russian Orthodox churches found along the East Coast. See historical reports for St. Andrew's Russian Orthodox Cathedral (HABS No. PA-6721) and St. Nicholas Russian Orthodox Church (HABS No. PA-6723) for more information about Novikov's work.

[21] For a period history and description of the Northern Liberties District, see: Rudolph J. Walther, *Happenings in ye Olde Philadelphia 1680-1900* (Philadelphia: Walther Printing House, 1925), 6, 13.

boroughs, and districts comprising Philadelphia County.[22] Located immediately to the north of Penn's city along the Delaware River, the Northern Liberties had been among the earliest areas settled and it rapidly developed during the first half of the nineteenth century with increased industrialization. This development began at the banks of the Delaware River and moved inland, occupying most of the district's open space by the fourth decade of the nineteenth century.[23]

In her writings regarding the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth-century conditions in the neighborhood, historian Susan H. Anderson observes that the Northern Liberties "was never a fashionable [neighborhood]…Rather it was a center for artisans and small businessmen who lived along the unpaved muddy streets in small crowded houses and in little 'courts' and alleys behind the numbered streets."[24] Anderson's description of the Northern Liberties can, in great part, be used to describe the district's later nineteenth century conditions as well. Its proximity to central Philadelphia, large amount of housing stock, inexpensive rents, numerous warehouses and factories, and ethnically diverse culture offered Philadelphia's poorer citizens or newly-arrived immigrants an ideal place to locate and build a life.

A social and physical hallmark of the Northern Liberties area throughout much of the nineteenth century was its numerous religious, social, and professional organizations, many of which were created by and for the district's immigrants. Such groups thrived in Philadelphia's Northeast where, according to one historian "skilled English workers…had their own unions…[while] the German workers of the district fostered a secession of benefit associations and building and loan societies, and the newly arrived Poles imitated the Germans in this respect…the Irish supported athletic and ethnic clubs as well as building and loan associations…[and] old Americans maintained their enthusiasm for fraternal organizations."[25] For all ethnic groups, churches provided a vital institution and venue for social interaction in addition to spiritual and professional development.[26]

The Central Presbyterian Congregation

In 1825, 104 Presbyterians in Philadelphia successfully petitioned their local church fathers to grant them permission to organize a new church in the Northern Liberties;

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[22] The portion of the Northern Liberties comprising the modern neighborhood bearing that name was known as the Northern Liberties District from 1803, when it was fully incorporated as an entity carved from Northern Liberties Township, until the Act of Consolidation in 1854.

[23] See: Henry S. Tanner, *Map of Philadelphia* (Philadelphia, 1836). Map accessible on the Internet at http://www.davidrumsey.com/maps2656.html.

[24] Susan H. Anderson, *The Most Splendid Carpet* (Philadelphia: National Park Service, 1978), 33.

[25] Sam Bass Warner, Jr., *The Private City* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1968), 180.

[26] Ibid.

however, because of numerous and varied disagreements, the new congregation soon broke into two smaller groups and formed the Second and Third Presbyterian churches of the Northern Liberties. Nevertheless, a few months later the members of both congregations managed to overcome their differences and together formed "The First Presbyterian Church of Penn Township." This unity did not last long, for shortly thereafter the unified "…communion was distracted and divided," resulting in one half of the congregation retaining the church, the pastor, and the name and the other half leaving to worship first in a schoolhouse on Philadelphia's Poplar Street and later in Commissioners' Hall on Third Street.[27]

On June 24, 1835, while still meeting in Commissioners' Hall, this congregation of twenty-one parishioners organized a new entity that they named "The Central Presbyterian Church in the Northern Liberties." Before the end of that year, this congregation moved into their newly-constructed church building on the corner of Coates (later Fairmount) and Fourth streets where they remained for the next thirty four years. After selling the Coates Street building in 1869, the congregants relocated to a new church they constructed near the corner of Franklin and Thompson streets above Gerard Avenue and voted to change their name to the "Temple Presbyterian Church of Philadelphia."[28]

The Salem German Reformed Congregation

The German Reformation movement originated primarily in the Palatine region of Germany where the region's many Protestant clerics solidified the movement's Calvinist doctrine in the sixteenth century.[29] Although it grew in popularity during the latter half of the sixteenth and opening years of the seventeenth century, the German Reformed movement, like the Palatine region itself, was deeply impacted by the Thirty Years War. The war's destruction together with the region's subsequent political turmoil persuaded many Reformed groups to leave their German homeland and immigrate to England and, later, America.[30]

Many Germans who settled in America established themselves in Pennsylvania and brought the German Reformed doctrine to the New World. These first German settlers

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[27] Mitchell, 10-13.

[28] Hammonds, 75.

[29] The Palatine was a region of modern Germany extending across two states, one of which was located in southwest Germany between Luxembourg and the Rhine River while the other was situated in eastern Bavaria. This area was traditionally ruled by the Counts of Palatine and was a stronghold of German Protestantism. Frederick III, the elector of Saxony, played a key role in this process by supporting the development of the German Reformed Movement's Heidelberg Catechism of 1563. Among other things, this catechism emphasized the role of faith in bringing an individual closer to God, concluding that faith, and not good works, provided the primary means to salvation. For more information on the Palatine region, see: A.G. Roeber, *Palatines, Liberty and Property: German Lutherans in Colonial British America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998); *United Church of Christ History and Program: That They May All Be One* (Cleveland: United Church Press, 1991), 6-9.

[30] *United Church of Christ History and Program*, 6-22.

gradually established congregations that were initially led by laymen. Eventually, ministers migrated to America and began to formally organize the churches along much of the eastern seaboard. Pennsylvania remained an important center for the Reformed church in America throughout much of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries because of the state's large population of Germans adhering to German Reform doctrine.[31]

By the opening decades of the nineteenth century, many German Reform pastors and their congregants had acclimated to American culture and consequently began holding services in English and evangelizing among non-German speakers. These actions upset more traditional church members who fought to maintain the centrality of the church's German language and culture. Wishing to participate only in German-language services, a group of parishioners broke off from central Philadelphia's First German Reformed Church and officially established the Salem German Reformed Church on November 25, 1818. The Salem Reformed congregation's initial church building, completed in 1819, was located near the corner of Philadelphia's N. American and Green streets The congregation later moved to a building situated at "St. John Street below Green" before finally moving into the building at Fourth Street and Fairmount Avenue in 1874.[32] Perhaps concerned this new building would detach them from their earlier history, the German Reformed congregation incorporated the cornerstone of their original 1819 building into the walls of their Fourth and Fairmount church.

In 1870, the German Reformed congregation's size had reached close to fifteen hundred members, but fifty years later, their number had dropped considerably, making it necessary for the church's remaining congregants to sell their building. After the St. Michael the Archangel Russian Orthodox Church purchased the building in 1923, the Salem German Reformed Church merged with the Zion Reformed Congregation and relocated to the latter's sanctuary located near the corner of Sixth Street and Girard Avenue.[33]

St. Michael the Archangel Russian Orthodox Congregation

Many of the original founders of the St. Michael the Archangel Russian Orthodox Church immigrated to the United States from the former Austrian province of Galicia, located in the Carpathian region of Eastern Europe, an area located in present-day Poland and Ukraine.[34] While in Europe, many of these immigrants had belonged to Uniate

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[31] Ibid., 9, 19-21.

[32] "Church Notices," *Philadelphia Public Ledger*, 10 Oct. 1874; Saverino, 2-4.

[33] Saverino, 4.

[34] Like other ethnic groups in America at the turn-of-the-twentieth century, Slavic immigrants often experienced the effects of prejudice then prevalent in the United States. At that time, Americans and Western Europeans frequently regarded Eastern Europe and Russia as a mysterious and primitive place, and its people equally mysterious and primitive. In his 1905 book, *The Russian Peasant*, published in both Philadelphia and London, English author Howard P. Kennard promoted these preconceptions in his descriptions of the country and its citizens. With regard to the "Russian peasant," Kennard wrote the

congregations that merged elements of both Eastern Orthodox and Roman Catholic rites. Hundreds of years of political accommodations, alliances, and territorial invasions between Eastern and Western European powers had brought about the creation of such churches, commonplace in large sections of Eastern and Mediterranean Europe at the end of the nineteenth century. While widespread in parts of Europe, many Roman Catholic clerics in the United States considered Uniate churches to be heretical and greatly discouraged their formation.[35] As a result, most recent immigrants chose to fully return to the Orthodox faith rather then accept and adopt "American-style" Catholicism.[36] Such was the case with the St. Michael the Archangel congregation, which began as Uniate or Eastern Catholic parish, but over time became fully Russian Orthodox.

Eight men from what committee notes refer to as a "newly organized church" and ten from nearby St. Andrew's Russian Orthodox Cathedral founded St. Michael the Archangel Church in 1908. During the course of their initial meeting, the men resolved to form a "Russian" or Slavic congregation in the Northern Liberties that would retain the native Galician chant during services, but also aim to serve all Eastern European immigrants. Over the next several years, St. Michael the Archangel began to attract large numbers of Uniate parishioners who had recently emigrated from Europe to the United States.[37] Because of this, the congregants succeeded in erecting a large church at the corner of Sixth Street and Spring Garden Avenue into which they moved before the end of 1914. Unfortunately, the congregation was forced to leave this building after less than a decade because of a plan to build a bridge at the end of Spring Garden to span the Delaware River and link with New Jersey. This plan necessitated the street's widening from the corner of Sixth Street to the Delaware River and caused the destruction of the original St. Michael the Archangel Church, together with many other buildings found at Spring Garden's eastern end. Although they were evicted from their building, the congregation of the nearby Salem German Reformed Church fortuitously decided to sell their church at that moment, allowing the St. Michael the Archangel congregation to purchase the building and remain close to the majority of its parishioners who lived in the Northern Liberties neighborhood.

Russian "hears no speech, he sees no scenes, he is incapable of observation, he possesses no understanding, his brain never works except in reference to objects that hit him between the eyes." To explain this condition, Kennard faulted the Russian peasant's "simplicity in overwhelming abundance—faith, trust, obedience to authority which he himself really believes in." Among other institutions, Kennard blamed the Russian Orthodox Church for encouraging the cultivation of the sort of faith which breeds "superstition and fear rather than devotion." See: Howard P. Kennard, *The Russian Peasant* (Philadelphia, J. B. Lippincott Company, 1908), 14, 15, 23.

[35] See: *Orthodox America 1794-1976: The Development of the Orthodox Church in America*, ed. Constance J. Tarasar and John H. Erickson (Syossett, New York: The Orthodox Church in America, 1975), 49.

[36] Dmitry Grigorieff, "The Orthodox Church in America an Historical Survey," *Russian Review* 31 (Apr. 1972): 138-52. See also Tarasar and Erickson, 15-48.

[37] Saverino, 4-7.

After their move into the church on Fourth Street and Fairmount Avenue, the parish passed the next several decades quietly; however, this lull ended in the late-1950s and 1960s when the congregation was forced to face questions regarding its identity. Although they had ultimately decided to follow Russian Orthodoxy over Eastern Catholicism early in the twentieth century, they still faced the decision of which Orthodox hierarchy they wished to follow. Many of the St. Michael the Archangel parishioners hoped to reestablish the church's pre-Revolutionary associations with the Moscow Patriarchy, while others wanted to retain association with the Orthodox Church of America established after the 1917 Revolution in order to help stabilize the Russian church's American parishes. This question created sharp divisions within the parish, which were only resolved by splitting the congregation. Those who wished to associate themselves with the Orthodox Church of America affiliated with the newly-constructed St. Steven's Russian Orthodox Church located near Philadelphia's Pennypack Park while those who wished to ally the parish with the Moscow Patriarchy maintained their membership at St. Michael the Archangel.[38] Currently, St. Michael the Archangel Russian Orthodox Church provides Orthodox services in English and is closely associated with the Russian Orthodox Church's Moscow Patriarchy.

PART II: ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. **Architectural character:** St. Michael the Archangel Russian Orthodox Church is an articulate example of Romanesque Revival church architecture, which became popular in the United States toward the end of the nineteenth century. With a two-story sanctuary raised over a semi-below grade social hall, the church has a form common to urban churches of the period that makes optimal use of confined city sites. The building's sense of height is further accentuated by a prominent tower and steeple.

2. **Condition of fabric:** Good

B. Description of Exterior:

1. **Overall dimensions:** 65'-8" x 86'-0"

2. **Foundations:** Load-bearing masonry. St. Michael's foundations are faced with granite stones on the building's principal (south) exterior elevation and slate tiles on the three other exterior walls. On the interior, the church's accessible foundation walls are plastered, making it difficult to fully ascertain their composition. Areas where this plaster coating has chipped away reveal that much

[38] For more information regarding this chapter of the congregation's history, see: "Church Members Row—Again," *Philadelphia Bulletin* 12 Feb. 1965; "Judges Confirm Vote in Church Factional Dispute," *Philadelphia Bulletin* 6 Oct. 1967; and "Court Rules Church's Ties Are with Moscow, Not U.S.," *Philadelphia Bulletin* 12 Nov. 1969. Clippings in the "St. Michael the Archangel Church" folder, Urban Archives, Paley Library, Temple University, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

of the church's foundation walls are brick. As the building largely occupies the footprint of the 1835 Central Presbyterian Church, its foundations likely incorporated materials from this earlier building.

3. **Walls:** All of the load-bearing brick walls are laid in common American bond, but feature molded brick corbelling along the church's roofline and around many of the church's windows, doors, and other openings.

South Elevation / Façade: The façade is separated into three vertical sections—two side sections bracket the extruded middle that extends upward beyond the roofline, forming its tower. Two arched doorways are set into this middle section and topped with a centered, circular window. A large stained glass window found above these doors originally featured a wooden casing that, like the doors, was composed of rounded elements echoing the arches elsewhere on the facade. This original window has been removed and replaced with modern stained glass. Gray granite window surrounds and decorative stonework help to articulate the façade walls and architectural elements. The ground level of each of the façade's side sections feature arched windows that help to light twin staircases.

East and West Elevations: These walls are divided into six bays, each containing a ground-level window or door opening surmounted by a double-height arched window on the upper (sanctuary) level. These upper windows are contained in slightly recessed expanses of wall further accented by decorative corbelling similar to that used on the facade.

North Elevation: The church's north elevation is a solid brick wall with no windows or doors. This elevation is largely not visible because of adjacent buildings.

4. **Structural Systems, Framing:** Load-bearing masonry walls carry the weight of the floor joists and roof system. On the interior, the floors receive additional support from brick supports and iron columns found on the ground- and upper-levels. The slate roof is supported by a series of steeply pitched trusses located above the sanctuary's arched ceiling.

4. **Openings:**

Doorways and doors: On the church's facade, arched doors provide principal access. These are set deeply into the wall and are separated by a brick pier with a carved stone base and capital. Two ground-level doors, one on the east and one of the west, open onto the exterior. They feature heavily paneled doors topped by transoms bearing three fixed lights, together set into openings topped by a segmental brick arches.

Windows: Many of the church's windows have been altered over the course of the twentieth century. Currently, the tall stained-glass windows are glazed with

large panes of stained glass that span the window opening. This glass replaced the church's original windows, which had heavy casings filled with small, diamond-shaped pieces of glass, each painted with crowns and floral motifs. The ground-level window openings on the east and west elevations contain eight-over-eight, double-hung sash.

5. **Roof:** Historic images of the church depict slates arranged in a decorative geometric pattern. Although still sheathed in slate, the present roofing is uniformly colored and does not replicate this pattern. The slates covering the steeple still convey a sense of the original decorative pattern.

C. **Description of the Interior:**

1. **Flooring:** Hardwood floors are present in the basement social hall, with carpet (presumably over hardwood) in the sanctuary. The sanctuary's floor raises two steps to the base of the iconostasis at the front (north) end of the sanctuary, helping to set the iconostasis and altar area apart from the rest of the space. Around its perimeter, the church's sanctuary features a tiered gallery supported by cast-iron columns in the Doric order.

2. **Wall and Ceiling Finish:** The walls and ceiling of the sanctuary are plastered and large sections are covered with murals; the remaining walls are simply painted in white. In the ground-floor social hall, the plaster walls are painted in an off-white.

3. **Trim and woodwork:** The outside perimeter of the sanctuary's gallery is lined with decorative wooden paneling with carved rosettes while the perimeter of the ceiling features heavy crown molding embellished with dentils and gilded bands. The sanctuary's large, upper-level window in the south wall is framed by an arch supported by eight Doric columns (four on each side of the arch), which have been painted white and gilded to match the surrounding woodwork.

   In the ground-level social hall, simple wood moldings contrast with the off-white plaster walls. Bead-board wainscoting framed by a chair rail extends around the lower portion of the room's walls.

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PART IV: PROJECT INFORMATION

The project was co-sponsored by the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) of the National Park Service and the Society of Architectural Historians, as the Sally Kress Tompkins Fellowship. The 2006 documentation of St. Andrew's Russian Orthodox Cathedral, St. Michael the Archangel Russian Orthodox Church, and St. Nicholas Russian Orthodox Church was undertaken by HABS, Richard O'Connor, Acting Chief of Heritage Documentation Programs; under the direction of Catherine C. Lavoie, Acting Chief of HABS. The project leader was HABS historian James A. Jacobs. The project was completed during the summer of 2006 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, by Sally Kress Tompkins Fellow David Amott (University of Delaware).

APPENDIX A: PHOTOGRAPHS

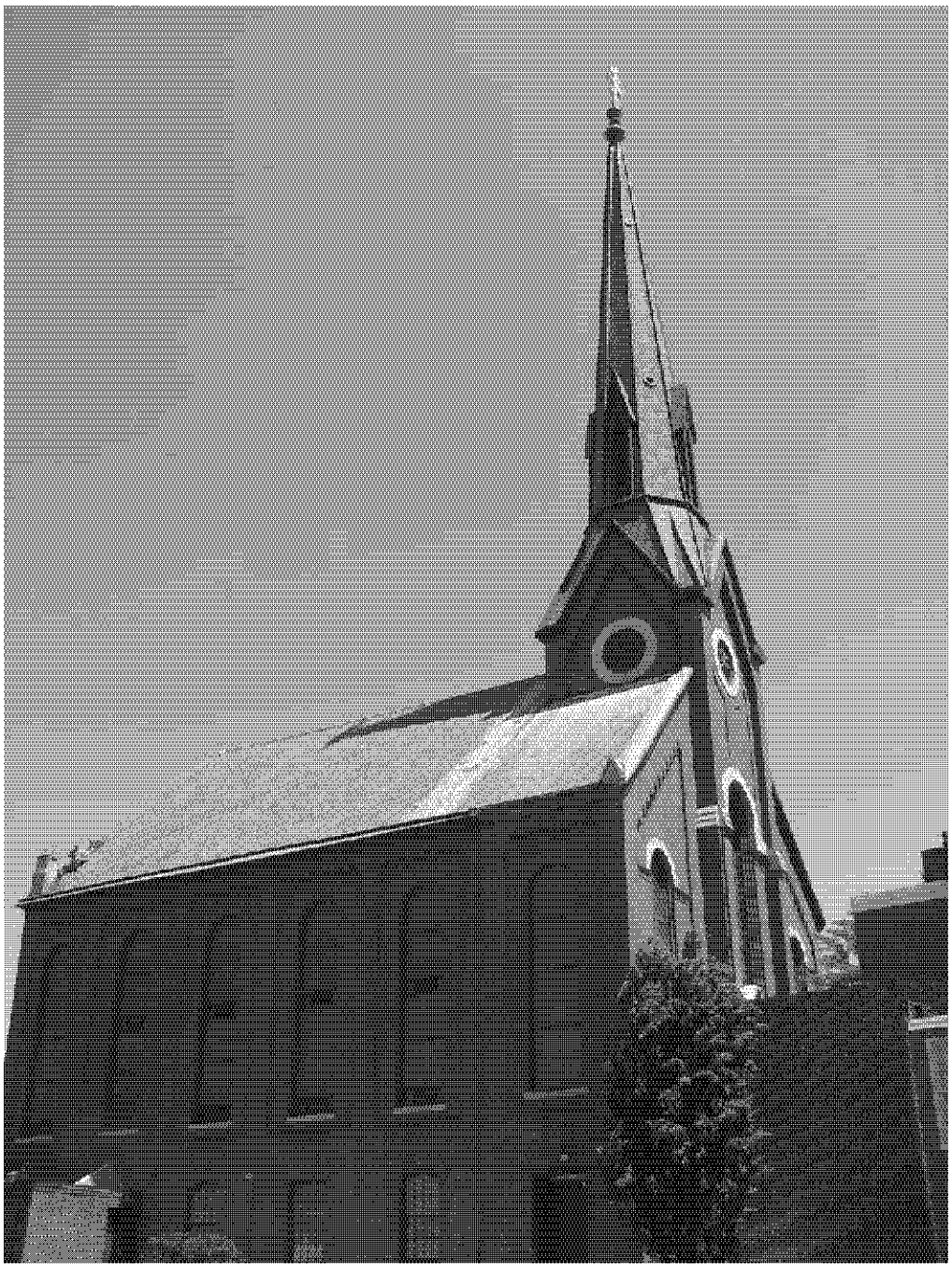

Fig. 1. St. Michael the Archangel Russian Orthodox Church, looking northeast. James A. Jacobs, 2006.

Fig. 2. St. Michael the Archangel Russian Orthodox Church, sanctuary interior. David Amott, 2006.